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## Infinite and Finite Games: Play and Visual Culture

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### Abstract (summary)

In this article, I shall argue for the value of conceptualizing, and practicing art education as a kind of play or game, drawing inspiration from the concepts of finite and infinite games<sup>1</sup> articulated by philosopher James Carse (1986). In so doing, I seek to encourage a continuing dialogue with the assumptions that constrain the theoretical basis and practice of contemporary art education and to articulate what is at stake in a proposed transition from an art education focused mainly on traditional fine arts and crafts to a visual or material culture education that would examine the icons, meanings, and forms present throughout our cultural space and social experience. [PUBLICATION ABSTRACT]

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#### Headnote

In this article, I shall argue for the value of conceptualizing, and practicing art education as a kind of play or game, drawing inspiration from the concepts of finite and infinite games<sup>1</sup> articulated by philosopher James Carse (1986). In so doing, I seek to encourage a continuing dialogue with the assumptions that constrain the theoretical basis and practice of contemporary art education and to articulate what is at stake in a proposed transition from an art education focused mainly on traditional fine arts and crafts to a visual or material culture education that would examine the icons, meanings, and forms present throughout our cultural space and social experience.

Throughout its history, art education has faced challenges to its selfconception and its mission. The most recent challenge, and the one that concerns me, is the claim that art education needs to broaden its mission and focus to include elements of our visual culture not traditionally thought of as art. This challenge has been put forward in several different forms: as social reconstruction (Hicks, 1989 & 1994; Hicks & King, 1999; Freedman, 1994), as material culture education (Bolin & Blandy, 2003), or as visual culture education (Boughton, et al., 2002; Chalmers, 2001; Duncum, 1999, 2001; Duncum & Bracey, 2001; Freedman, 2000, 2003; Tavin, 2000, 2003). In all these cases, the point of the challenge is not to deny the value and relevance of traditional art forms. Rather, the goal is to encourage art education to expand its horizons to include the contextual study of domains of cultural production that it currently tends to ignore. In this article, I wish to continue the effort to articulate and defend these related challenges to the dominant understanding of the mission of art education. My hope is that further discussion of the movement to extend the scope and range of art education will help demonstrate the value of undertaking this professional transformation, and clarify the new opportunities for scholarship and teaching that this movement would open up.

What is the dominant understanding of art education that advocates of social reconstructivist, material culture or visual culture<sup>2</sup> art education find problematic? I believe the core concern is with the notion that the mission of art education is limited to providing education and training in the creation and appreciation of objects within the primarily Western European tradition of the fine arts and crafts. Classroom teaching of students usually seems to presuppose this mission. Art students are expected to master the elements and principles of design and composition, skills such as perspective drawing, structures of formal analysis, or the techniques involved in ceramics and painting.

This conception of art education can also be seen in the artworks that decorate the walls and illustrate the books found in most art classrooms. The overwhelming preference for modern (primarily Expressionist, Impressionist and Cubist) American and European fine and craft-based art forms as the content basis for art education suggests a particularly limited set of exemplars. And efforts to diversify the art education curriculum that simply add "women's art" or "multi-cultural art" and stir, appear perhaps more like efforts to maintain the status quo than actually to confront a perspective on art education that is becoming increasingly problematic in our rapidly changing world.

Naturally, this perspective on art education is self-perpetuating. Based on their experiences in high school art classes and in the studio courses of the university, art education students come to believe that the only way to teach art is through the development of skills, techniques, and facility with the elements and principles of design. They see these as the basic rules by which to determine their own and their future students' success.

The dominant approach to art education excludes a wide range of visual and related phenomena that play an important role in the everyday life of contemporary students. As a result, students in schools and in universities lose the opportunity to study these cultural phenomena with a critical and

engaged eye. These students are not encouraged to analyze the material culture of mass consumption or mass entertainment, the iconography of contemporary politics, or the form and meaning of objects outside their immediate reach. As a result, they are encouraged to believe that these forms of cultural production are beyond their proper competence to study, analyze, and interpret.

In an effort to encourage a sense of the limitations that this dominant approach to art education creates, I have changed the rules in my own classroom, making it impossible to be successful if you create and implement lessons using traditional constructs alone. Instead, students are expected to work from larger, more inclusive and contextualized concepts, such as memory or place. Many of these concepts, on the surface, have nothing to do with art as a particular set of skills and principles, but rather focus on the events and concerns that have and continue to frame diverse realms of human experience. In so doing, students are encouraged to extend their understanding of what is relevant to art education, so that they can move in what I hope are new and challenging directions for them as artists, future educators, and citizens.

My own research has frequently sought to articulate an alternative view of art education by addressing the importance of understanding and teaching the diversity of human visual culture within appropriate social and political contexts. Indeed, I believe that art education has an obligation to consider the ways in which art and, more broadly, visual or material culture, affect and are affected by the broader social world in which it exists. In doing so, it is essential that we also think about how students and the profession itself are affected by this broader social world, while playing an active role within it. Once we see students and art education professionals as interactive agents in social and political contexts, we can see the need to reflect critically on how our own professional mission may have been limited by that context and realize that we may be passing these limits on to our students.

In my recent work, I frequently find myself playing with the boundaries of art education. On the one hand, I have researched the human body as a site of artistic and cultural creation. Investigating women's bodybuilding and various forms of body transformation has enabled me to think about the limits placed on what is allowed to count as art. Not only am I forced to play with boundaries between fine art and those aesthetic practices that lie outside the realm of the "art world," but also with the boundaries placed on what counts as legitimate interpretation and analysis of an artwork. Following my contextualist orientation, for example, I constantly battle with the line drawn between aesthetic/ formalist analysis and social and political theory.

I am also playing with boundaries in a different dimension. I am fascinated by the potentialities contained in material culture and the ways in which human creative endeavors show up in contexts and venues that traditional art education has tended to ignore or marginalize. These interests lead me to seek a way to extend the practice of art education by encouraging engagements with aesthetic practices and visual forms that not only fall under headings such as folk art, outsider art, or performance art, but that also include MTV, video games, zines and fashion. By extending itself to address such aesthetic forms, art education enables students to engage key features of their own lived experience while at the same time, reaching into realms outside the familiar. If art educators do take these practices seriously, then we will want to study such cultural forms as tattooing or scarification, images painted on slices of wood stumps or slate, and wire baskets or small animal forms created from recycled materials, as well as the images and aesthetic processes that make up the world of television, film, and the Internet. Engagements such as these address limitations in current conventions of what art education is about and seek to extend the activity of art educators and students into new dimensions.

It is this continuing dialogue with our own assumptions and with the context of the world around us that is essential, I think, to a socially responsible art education that embraces the richness of human visual and material culture. Responsibility shows itself in the willingness to confront anomalies and problematic situations-whether these are generated by changes in the cultural backgrounds of our students or social and political challenges.

#### Concept of Play

Motivating a continuing dialogue with the assumptions and presuppositions that constrain our practice requires that we stay continually on the lookout for new theoretical tools. To further enhance this critical dialogue, I wish to use the concept of play to help articulate what is at stake in a proposed transition from an art education focused mainly on traditional fine arts and crafts to a visual or material culture education that would examine the icons, meanings, and forms present throughout our cultural space and social experience. My use of play as a tool for critical reflection on art education is somewhat paradoxical. I have often found myself at odds with parents and school officials for whom art and art education are thought of as mere "play," that is, forms of entertainment and leisure that are optional extras within the educational context of the school. In the past, I have wanted to insist on the seriousness of art and art education, rather than on its playful nature. But, I think we need to look more closely at the concept of play and use it to explore art and art education.

For the purposes of this essay, I wish to focus on a notion of play that is open-ended and ongoing, rather than closed and finite. Berlyne (1966) and Ellis (1973), for example disagree with those who see play as an attempt to gain control over aspects of the environment (White, 1959). In their view, the motivation for play relies on the creation of an aroused or stimulated state (Ellis, 1973). The degree of arousal is based on the attributes an object or situation presents. Berlyne (1966) groups these attributes into three classifications: novelty, uncertainty or dissonance, and complexity. Based on an individual's assessment of these attributes, interaction with an object or situation is either avoided or sought out. During play, this interaction takes the form of exploration, investigation, manipulation (Ellis, 1973), and epistemic-based behaviors. As the focus of interaction changes, new attributes are presented that require, and therefore, continue the processes of assessment and engagement.

This notion of play as an on-going process of arousal can be seen as the basis of Diane Ackerman's theory of deep play (1999). Ackerman describes play as something that "happens in a special mental place, with time limits and rules, beyond everyday life. It contains uncertainty, illusion, an element of make-believe or fantasy, and allows one to take risks, or explore new roles" (p. 14). But for Ackerman, when play reaches an ecstatic level of engagement, it becomes deep play. Deep play requires concentration, a willingness to risk, to live in an aroused state of uncertainty, to transcend the everyday experience, an acceptance of play as having "a life of its own," and the presence of a playground, a space outside ourselves that is defined as separated from the "rest of reality." In Ackerman's theory of deep play, the playground becomes the space in and against which we push ourselves to our limits, within which we are challenged and lose ourselves in the process of exploration, novelty, and the discovery of new, unfamiliar potentials for play.

Understood in this sense, play is at the very heart of artistic and cultural process. As we know, art, as well as other forms of aesthetic and cultural production, requires an exploration of concepts and motivations as well as of the properties of different materials and media; and it involves self-conscious interaction between the maker, his or her physical and cultural environment, and the work of others. Art is a dynamic process in which individuals regularly experiment with new forms of expression that respond to the world around them.

Art and play are most obviously connected when we focus on the process of artmaking. Making art is an attempt to come to understand the world—a world that is sensible and physical, as well as social and cultural. Just as play emerges from an innate curiosity about the structure of the environment in which one plays, so art might be seen as a disciplined curiosity, a probing of the possibilities hidden in lived experience, in materials, and in sensations. Just as play is sustained by encountering novel situations, so artmaking seeks out and is nourished by new and unexplored encounters with the physical and cultural world.

I wish, however, to refine this discussion of play in order to use it more precisely to discuss the current challenges to art education. In *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) write that metaphors structure our thinking, our expectations, and our actions. It is important, therefore, to understand the implications of the metaphors we use. Deciding how to interpret the metaphor of play is a serious endeavor. If we get the metaphor wrong, we run the risk of misunderstanding what we are doing and, thus, acting inappropriately. Our conception of play and games may have a profound effect on how we continue the practice of art education. As I shall argue, if we think that making and teaching art is a "finite game," our behavior will differ radically from what it would be if we thought that art and education were "infinite games." In my view, art education must include both finite and infinite play.

#### Infinite and Finite Games

In what follows, I shall argue for the value of conceptualizing, and practicing art education as a kind of play or game, drawing inspiration from the concepts of finite and infinite games articulated by philosopher James Carse (1986). According to Carse "there are at least two kinds of games. ... A finite game is played for the purpose of winning, an infinite game for the purpose of continuing the play" (p. 3). I shall explore how this understanding of play can usefully shape our endeavors as art educators and provide fruitful metaphors to guide our practices.

Carse uses the notion of playing finite and infinite games metaphorically to describe two different ways of acting and thinking about our engagement in and with the world. Finite games are bounded games. They are structured by specific beginning points and endings, as well as by clear expectations about what it takes to win or lose the game. In this sense, most of the everyday games we play—games like soccer, chess, or shopping, or teaching the elements and principles of design as the basis for art learning—are finite games. As finite games, Carse claims, the activities involved in each practice are governed by acceptance of a particular set of rules and goals. To play soccer, the players must all agree to the rules and have the same understanding of what brings the game to a close in a win or loss. Similarly, the practice of art education has been structured by an agreement on what will count as a well-educated or trained art student. Despite the vigor of theoretical debates about art education, its role and scope, classroom practice has remained fairly consistent over the decades. With minor variations the same well-known artists, artistic movements and styles, as well as the same concepts and overarching goals and objectives remain the core of art education practice. The well-trained student, then, continues to be one who has mastered skills in producing particular kinds of art objects, as well as the theoretical concepts implicated in the making of these objects. All such finite games are "theatrical," in Carse's terminology, because they are scripted in advance. We may not know in advance which student will "win", but we do know what the game is and what the person must do in the game if he or she is to succeed.

Infinite games are different, however. By an infinite game, Carse refers to a willingness to cross boundaries. As he puts it, "Finite players play within boundaries; infinite players play with boundaries" (p. 12). Infinite games have a different purpose from those that define finite games. The purpose is not to complete the game by winning it, but rather to ensure that the game continues, even if this means re-writing the rules. Infinite games are "dramatic" rather than "theatrical." That is, they are not repetitions of parts already scripted in the past, but instead, open out into an unknown and as yet unscripted future. Infinite play, therefore, cannot be contained within the boundaries of past practice, but necessarily confronts opportunities arising from the crossing and problematizing of boundaries.

We should not understand Carse to be saying that one type of game is always superior to the other. There are contexts in which finite games are perfectly appropriate. Indeed, soccer, chess, and the structures of Impressionist painting are not possible except as finite games. But there are times when finite games seem to break down or reach an impasse. Under such conditions, a willingness to engage in infinite play can take on a sudden urgency. It is this interface between the finite and the infinite game that strikes me as a fruitful place for theorizing.

As an example, recall Plato's representation of Socrates in *The Republic* and other works, where we can see this interface in a philosophical context. Socrates was notorious for confronting well-known figures in Athenian society and challenging them with questions that revealed the limits of their knowledge and practice. "What is piety?" he asks the priest. "What is courage?" he asks the general. Inevitably it turned out that the individuals involved could not answer the apparently simple questions Socrates asked. In each case, these well-known figures were discovered to be playing finite games. In other words, they relied on conventional interpretations of ideas like piety or courage—interpretations which had always seemed sound and workable until then—but they were unwilling to acknowledge or respond to the problems that Socrates tended to uncover in these conventions. Unlike Socrates, they could not play with the conceptual boundaries that defined their practices, but could only play within them. As a result, they were unable to recover from the collapse of their taken-for-granted assumptions and continue the inquiry with Socrates.

Of course, Socrates' ability to find anomalies within conventional practices and his desire to problematize them led him into political difficulties. While he sought to engage others in discussion in order to seek a truth beyond the finite games of conventional understandings and behavior, most of his interlocutors were threatened by such infinite play and could not, or would not, follow him.

I suggest that we should think about art and art education in a way that also highlights the interface between finite and infinite play. The history of art provides ample evidence that, like Socrates, artists too have found themselves constrained by the limitations of finite artistic and cultural games, and great

leaps forward often result from the willingness to play with the boundaries, to rethink and redefine the rules of art conventions and expectations.

In our own discipline we have seen a number of rule-changes resulting from a realization that the existing finite game had come to seem static and unproductive. In such cases, it was our willingness to play with the boundaries that helped to re-enliven the educational practice. In the 1960s and 1970s, for example, art educators such as June King McFee and Vincent Lanier reached beyond the notion of art education as limited to the creative process of artists to more boldly embrace an understanding of art education as intimately linked to social and cultural identity and experience. McFee's *Preparation for Art* (1961/1970) and then later, *Art, Culture and Environment* (1977) (co-authored with Rogena Degge) as well as Lanier's *The Arts We See* (1982) attempted to move art education beyond the finite games of a modernist notion of art as the expression of an individual. They did this by crossing the boundaries of art education to draw from the greater experience and potential to be derived from an enhanced understanding of culture and place.

Influenced directly or indirectly by the earlier work of scholars such as McFee and Lanier, some art educators have begun to discuss and debate the role of visual culture in contemporary art education. These individuals aim to reclaim the rich potential of art education to engage in the larger human arena of visual interaction. For these art educators, the existing theoretical structure within which contemporary art education is framed has become indefensible. Its capacity to help us make sense of human aesthetic experience is limited. It can be said that, for these scholars, the dominant understanding of art education practice reflects a set of finite games that have lost their rationale. Agreement as to the appropriateness of the rules and goals of art education no longer seems possible and they have set out, therefore, to attempt a rewriting of the rules of the game. This attempt to play with the boundaries of art education, rather than simply within them, is symptomatic of "infinite play."

It is important to note here that infinite play is not about undermining finite games just for the sake of it. As Carse says, there can be many finite games within infinite play. Rather, infinite play is what happens, or can happen, when problems are uncovered in the course of a finite game. In this sense, Carse's work resembles that of pragmatist philosophers like Dewey and James, as well as Thomas Kuhn's work on paradigm shifts in the history of science.

#### Normal Science and Extraordinary Research

To better understand Carse's distinction between finite and infinite games and how it can help us to conceptualize the nature of a more expansive art education, it might be useful to build on this link to Kuhn and to the pragmatists. In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), Kuhn famously introduced the concepts of paradigm and paradigm change to analyze the history of science. Within a particular scientific paradigm, scientists engage in what Kuhn called "normal science." "Normal science aims to refine, extend, and articulate a paradigm" (p. 122), Kuhn writes. In the process, anomalies are discovered. If these become too insistent, normal science gives way to "extraordinary research" which seeks a way out of the crisis into which the scientific paradigm has fallen. Kuhn, like Dewey (1952) and James (1955), recognized that anomalies only show themselves against a background of accepted theories, beliefs, and expectations. When the anomalies become critical, the accepted assumptions become so problematic that they cannot be tolerated without further inquiry and research. At this point, the stage is set for a paradigm shift, the emergence of a new set of theories, beliefs and expectations that, in their turn, will set the agenda for normal science.

When we think of Kuhn's conception of normal science, we can see how it functions in some ways like Carse's finite game. The rules of the game are set, the pieces are in place, and the players know what they need to do to succeed. And this is fine as long as the research proceeds smoothly. It is only when normal science begins to uncover anomalies that cannot be fit into the existing theoretical framework that infinite play emerges as a possibility. Extraordinary research, in Kuhn's terminology, corresponds to infinite play. It involves a readiness to break with the existing paradigm or set of rules in order to keep the process of scientific research, of play, in motion.

This transition from normal science to a new paradigm closely resembles the pragmatist conception of inquiry. Inquiry emerges from the encounter with a problematic situation. In other words, inquiry emerges from a sense of doubt or a perception of indeterminacy. An existing belief no longer seems to work, i.e. to make sense of experience. In James's (1955) terminology, the rule for action embedded in a particular belief suddenly leads the believer into difficulties, where before it had always been successful.

Returning to Carse's metaphor, we might say that infinite play is a particular willingness to inquire, to continue a dialogue, to restructure the rules, to play with the boundaries of a game that has gone sour. It opposes itself to the defensive response that digs in its heels at the hint of a problem, denying the existence of anomaly. As such, infinite play is a process, a way of dealing with problematic situations. It is not in itself an alternative to finite games.

#### Training or Education

Carse aligns the differences between finite and infinite games with the dichotomy between training and education. In Carse's view, the difference lies partly in how we react to unexpected challenges or, using Carse's word, surprises. "Surprise," he writes, "causes finite play to end; it is the reason for infinite play to continue" (p. 22). More specifically, Carse is interested in how we respond to such challenges or surprises as a result of training or education. Training, he says, is to be "prepared against surprise" whereas education is being "prepared for surprise." he goes on to say that

Education discovers an increasing richness in the past, because it sees what is unfinished there. Training regards the past as finished and the future as to be finished. Education leads toward a continuing self-discovery; training leads toward a final self-definition. Training repeats a completed past in the future. Education continues an unfinished past into the future, (p. 23)

Engineers, we may hope, are being trained, that is, "prepared against surprise." It is their task to master a body of information, understand its applications, and proceed to unpack the implications of that knowledge in particular projects. Surprising results-the collapse of a bridge, for example-are a sign of failure and something that the engineer, as finite player, seeks to prevent. Surprises are not welcomed as new opportunities for inquiry. By contrast, learning in the liberal arts and sciences is usually understood to be a preparation for an open-ended life of continual education. A liberally educated person may certainly have mastered the history of a subject, but such a person seeks out new insights and new applications that may unsettle that history. Surprise

offers the opportunity for new interpretations, creativity, and originality.

In reflecting on the relevance of Carse's concepts of finite and infinite games to art education, we are, then, reflecting on whether art education is a kind of training or a form of education. Does it treat art and the teaching of art as repetition of a finished past, or does it see the past as unfinished and open to future interpretation? If art education is a form of training, then it is nothing more than a series of finite games, a process of gaining access to the rules of design, the techniques of making art, and the "isms" and personalities of Western artists. Its pedagogical mission would be to repeat the past according to a script of what counts as the "educated" art student. However, if art education is a form of education, in Carse's sense of the word, then infinite play is an essential part of art education. The pedagogical mission would, in this case, always contain an openness to what is not already scripted, a flair for the "dramatic" that allows for the possibility that particular limits must sometimes be incorporated into the game of art and education.

I have come to believe that thinking of games and play metaphorically can be useful for diagnosing and articulating some of my concerns with the current state of art education. To what extent, for example, does the dominant approach to art education see our role to be that of trainers, preparing students to play art as a finite game with winners and losers and fixed rules that may not be broken? Or do we teach the game of art as an infinite game, one where boundaries are always provisional and breakable in the interests of continuing play? And how do we see ourselves? Do we, as professionals, play the game of art education as a finite game with a fixed subject-matter and rules, or as an infinite game in which we are willing to re-write rules and expand traditional subject-matter?

In my experience, art is frequently taught as a finite game. As a result, art education itself is often played as a finite game. According to Carse, finite games have a specific beginning point and come to a definitive end through an agreement with those who play. This structure clearly applies to many of the games we play. The rules determine what it means to win and to lose. They specify the kinds of moves that are legal in the game, and the combination of these suggests to experienced players what the best strategies for playing might be. I suggest that we often teach students this way. But we also know that children often are willing to change the rules of the game, if the game seems in some way unsatisfying. Perhaps they are looking for those surprises that finite games seem to rule out and this is what marks that kind of play as a form of infinite game.

To the extent that we see art education as a kind of art training, then the metaphor of a finite game is appropriate. If the goal is to master skills and principles, as well as a canonical history of art, then it makes little sense to encourage experimentation in our students or playing with boundaries among educators.

But I think that we must learn to see art education as an infinite game that contains within itself-but is not exhausted by-a multitude of different finite games. There is room for the finite games of teaching perspectival drawing or color theory. And there is room for the finite games of teaching the traditions and history of fine art. These are not, however, the final goals of art education. In order to respond responsibly to the context in which art and teaching take place, we must educate our students to play infinite games. This means that we, as art education professionals, must be educated ourselves to enjoy surprises as we play with the boundaries of these finite games. We must be willing to engage new domains of aesthetic experience and encourage our students to play dramatically with the finite games they have learned, extending and revising their lessons into new territory, as cultural experience evolves. Such dramatic play will lead to surprises, for the students and for their teachers.

As Carse writes: "Persons are selected for finite play" and those who are selected can always be "removed from the game." This is because finite games also contain rules of eligibility and qualifications for participation. But "[n]o world is marked with the barriers of infinite play, and there is no question of eligibility since anyone who wishes may play an infinite game" (p. 8). We must, therefore, guard against the barriers that frequently deny eligibility to potential players and their play. By engaging in infinite play, we acknowledge the existence of such barriers and the responsibility of judging when they have become a hindrance to the continuation of the game.

Responsibility also shows itself in infinite play's willingness to reinterpret the meaning and significance of the past. In responding to the work of earlier artists, the infinite player must be willing to consider the ways in which the meaning and implications of historical works and concepts evolve over time and in response to changing cultural and environmental contexts. Education in the arts should not be reduced to a training that simply reifies the past. It must see the meaning of the past as dynamically connected to the present and future.

Paradoxically, then, social responsibility in art education presupposes a willingness to play. If play is a willingness to explore and investigate a particular environment, to take risks in the search for novelty and discovery, to engage interactively in a continuing dynamic process, then play is at the heart of art education. It is what motivates and justifies the effort required to learn the rules and techniques inherent in the finite games we play. It is also what motivates and propels us to challenge these rules and to trespass on boundaries in the interests of continuing the dynamic process of art and teaching.

Of course, as Carse insists:

To be playful is not to be trivial or frivolous, or to act as though nothing of consequence will happen. On the contrary, when we are playful with each other we relate as free persons, and the relationship is open to surprise; everything that happens is of consequence. It is, in fact, seriousness that closes itself to consequence, for seriousness is a dread of the unpredictable outcome of open possibility. To be serious is to press for a specified conclusion. To be playful is to allow for possibility whatever the cost to oneself, (p. 19)

It is playfulness that many of the constituencies of art education fear. But this fear is misguided, because it is assumed that playfulness and seriousness cannot coexist. If Carse is right, seriousness and playfulness exist in a productive and dynamic interaction. Seriousness as a condition of finite play sets the stage for later bouts of playfulness. And playfulness is the proper response to a seriousness that undermines play, blocks inquiry, and turns defensive in the face of anomalies and problems. Without both, neither art nor art education could sustain themselves.

Conclusions

The challenges to art education which social reconstructivism, material culture education or visual culture education seem to be posing are opportunities for infinite play. While these projects are still in the making, they do offer standpoints from which to make visible the limitations of the current set of finite games that constitute the practice of art education. Our task now must be to continue a dialogue about the various boundaries that those in our profession have determined will count as part of art education's content and mission in order to clarify for ourselves and others just where those boundaries have become constricting, unproductive, exclusionary, and a hindrance to a more substantial contribution by the profession to our students and to the culture at large. This task must be carried out without falling victim to the temptation to create just another set of finite games, with their own fixed rules, goals, and scripts. Maintaining the dramatic openness to surprise must remain an ingredient in all our border crossings.

#### Footnote

1 See Hausman, J. C (1991). The games we play: An editorial. *Art Education*, 44(5), 4-5.

2 The terms visual culture and material culture will be used somewhat interchangeably in this paper to imply the plethora of material objects and forms that humans create as a result of their attempt to understand, engage and transform the world. The point where music and image (MTV), where storytelling and performance (masks among the NW indigenous peoples), and where kinesthetic experience and visual images (video/computer games) merge is central to my conception of the domain of art education.

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